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FARMSTEADS AS MIRRORS OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND CHANGE: THE UKRAINIAN CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract. *Farmsteads reflect more than the nature and health of agricultural activity on individual farms and across geographic regions; they provide a reliable record of other aspects of cultural and economic adjustment and change. This paper considers the farmsteads constructed by the Ukrainian immigrants and their descendants who settled in one district of the Canadian prairies beginning in 1896. A field survey of four townships reveals that between the time of initial settlement and the present four distinct generations of farm structures were erected. These generations of buildings—labeled here pioneer, traditional, transitional, and modern—provide clear evidence of the economic progress and cultural adjustment made by Ukrainian farm families. More specifically, a parallel set of changes took place in house, barn, and outbuilding design and construction as families became more fully integrated into Anglo dominated Canadian society, giving up their traditional Old World building practices and replacing them with the more standard building forms, materials, and technology of their Anglo-Canadian neighbors.*

Farmsteads long have been recognized as significant elements of the rural landscape, mirrors that reflect the nature and health of agricultural activity on individual farms and across geographic regions (Trewartha 1948; Hart 1975:137-52). Since many such structures are converted to other uses or otherwise remain standing long after they have outlived their original functions, farmsteads provide tangible evidence of past as well as present agricultural conditions and farming practices (Kiefer 1972). Further, farmsteads also provide visible records of other facets of cultural change and adjustment (Chappel 1992). Yet despite their acknowledged value as mirrors of the past as well as the present rural scene and the existence of a large supporting literature on farmhouses, barns, and other types of farm structures, the building complexes that make up North American farmsteads remain under-reported in the academic literature.

Closer scrutiny of the literature on Old World farm building traditions in a North American setting reveals that only a few studies have addressed farmstead building complexes (Alanen and Tishler 1980; Burley and Horsfall 1989; Jordan and Kaups 1989; Comeaux 1992). Instead the overwhelming majority have focused on the form and mode of construction of houses and, to a lesser extent, barns. With few exceptions, the structures reported on can be characterized as being representative of that generation of vernacular buildings that come closest to adhering to Old World building traditions. In contrast, far less attention has been paid to structures built prior to that most-European generation of structures, and fewer still consider how building practices were subsequently altered and the built forms modified by the immigrants and their descendants (Lehr 1975a; Noble 1992). Indeed, only in a few instances does later immigrant construction receive so much as passing comment (Conzen 1990:227). It stands to reason that examination of subsequent construction should provide additional insight into changes and adaptations that were part of the broader adjustment process immigrant farm families and their descendants experienced. By looking at the entire farmstead it becomes possible to make comparisons between the house, barn, and other outbuildings and to more clearly determine how modifications in a group's building practices were linked to agricultural developments and, perhaps more importantly, to the broader acculturation process.

This paper considers the character of a sample of farmsteads built and subsequently modified by Ukrainian immigrants and their descendants who began settling the parkland region of western Canada during the 1890s. More specifically, the farmsteads discussed here were located in four townships within the larger Ukrainian bloc settlement northwest of Dauphin, Manitoba. Field observations were made during the summer of 1991.

Background

The first group of Ukrainian immigrants arrived in Canada in 1892 and settled near Star, Alberta (Goresky 1975). During the next two decades preceding World War I, over 170,000 additional Ukrainians followed in their wake (Darcovich and Yuzyk 1980:507). With few exceptions, these people were peasants from, what was then, the Austro-Hungarian provinces of Galicia and Bukovyna, territory that included the westernmost extent of the Ukrainian ethnic region in Europe. The overwhelming majority migrated to Canada intent on acquiring homestead land and establishing a farm on the Canadian Prairies. But unlike most homesteaders in western Canada,

Ukrainian settlers were not drawn to the open prairie lands. Instead, they opted for land in the parkland belt, the ecozone where the grassland and forest land ecumenes merge. Their decision to reject prairie land of proven fertility in favor of more marginal treed land was based on several factors. Chief among them was the published advice of Dr. Osyp Oleskiv, a professor of agriculture in Lviv, Galicia, who toured the Canadian Prairies in 1895 (Oleskiv 1895). Like Oleskiv, the settlers themselves correctly perceived the parklands as offering a physical landscape reminiscent of their old homeland (Lehr 1975b:59). For later arrivals, an abiding desire to settle among fellow Ukrainians proved to be the dominant concern (Lehr 1985).

From the strict pragmatic perspective of a group of immigrants with severely limited financial resources, the parkland belt provided an abundance of resources in the form of timber for building, fencing, and fuel, marsh grass for roofing, water for livestock, and wild game and fish for dietary supplement—items the open prairie could not as easily provide. In short, the Ukrainians deduced that the parkland region better suited their immediate needs of achieving agricultural self sufficiency (Lehr 1991:36). By 1914, when immigration was halted by the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, Ukrainian immigrants had established a series of extensive tracts of near homogeneous ethnic settlement that stretched from southeastern Manitoba to central Alberta (Fig. 1).

Ukrainian Agricultural Conditions at the Time of Emigration

At the time of their emigration to Canada, the agricultural conditions faced by most of the Ukrainian population living within the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire were marginal. The bulk of the land was owned by absentee Austrian, Polish, German, or Rumanian landlords who charged high land rents while paying low wages for labor. Peasant operated farms were generally small, labor-intensive, and inefficient. In a period when it has been estimated that five hectares (approximately 12 acres) of land were the minimum required to achieve self-sufficiency, nearly half of all peasant land holdings in Galicia were smaller than two hectares (Himka 1982). Just 14.6% of the land in that province was comprised of farms of five to ten hectares in size (Balch 1906:179). The situation was worse yet in Bukovyna. There 42% of the peasants held less than two hectares, an additional 25% claimed less than three hectares, and 16% of the peasants were landless (Shlepakov 1960:23). To compound the problem, land holdings were often fragmented. The majority of farm families lived in agricultural villages and

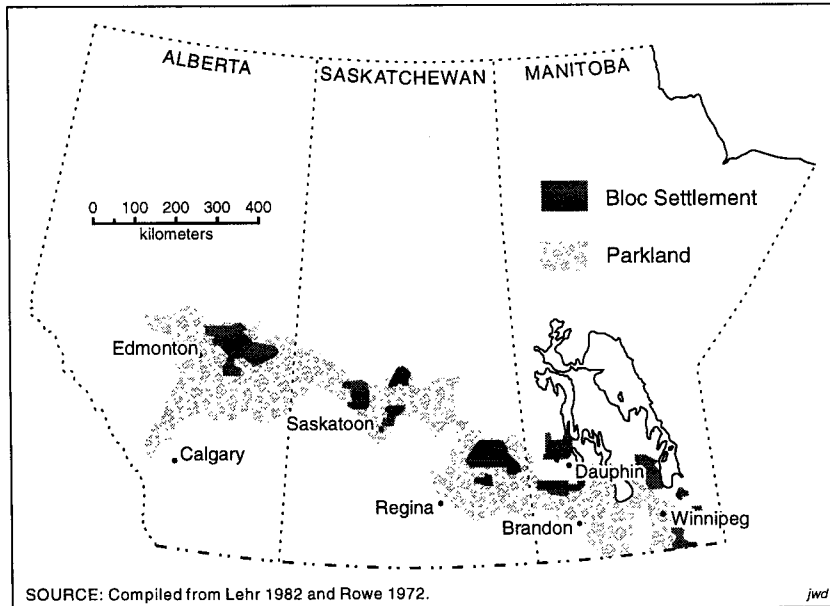


Figure 1. Location of Ukrainian bloc settlements and the Parkland ecozone.

worked arable plots scattered about the surrounding area, a situation that further detracted from efficient farm operation.

Peasant farmers in Galicia and Bukovyna practiced mixed agriculture. Wheat, rye, and potatoes were the dominant field crops, although barley, oats, and buckwheat also were common. Small amounts of specialty crops such as tobacco, flax, fennel, poppyseed, and aniseed were being grown for cash sale. Most farmers also raised some livestock for both sale and home consumption. Besides a draft animal or two, these could include beef and dairy cows, pigs, sheep, and some poultry. Finally, virtually every farm family planted a large vegetable garden and perhaps some berry bushes and fruit trees for its own needs (Hryniuk 1985).

These conditions were reflected in the character of the village-located farmsteads. A typical Ukrainian farmstead consisted of a small one-story dwelling and several outbuildings. The number and size of these buildings tended to be directly proportional to the size and quality of an individual's land holdings (Prysiachniuk 1981:93). As is customary with folk architecture, there was considerable consistency in building design within local

areas and indeed beyond. Thus, for example, while there were distinct differences between Bukowinian and Galician house design, there also were many basic similarities. Differences tended to be more decorative or stylistic in nature, while similarities included such things as basic construction techniques, room arrangement, and building orientation.

Houses were invariably built of logs, which, providing the timber was of good quality, were held in place with wooden pegs and dovetail or saddle notch jointery. If the quality of the timber was less, either post and fill or vertical log construction was used instead. Except for parts of the highland areas in the Carpathian Mountains, the interior and exterior walls of the dwelling were plastered with a mixture of animal dung, clay, and straw and then whitewashed inside and out (Bilash 1983:142). Most structures were covered by a high-pitched, broad eaved, thatched roof, although occasionally hand split wood shingles were used (Lehr 1980:190).

Dwellings normally contained one, two, or three rooms, each with a clearly defined set of functions (Fig. 2). The rooms were known as the *velyka khata*, or "big house," the *mala khata*, or "little house," and the *seny*, or entry hallway. Tradition dictated that the *velyka khata* be used as the special occasions room and the parents' bedroom in cases of large families. The *mala khata* served as kitchen, general meeting room, and children's bedroom (Samojlovych 1972). It contained a massive clay bake oven which was used for both heating and cooking (Kosmina 1980:63). The *seny* provided additional storage space for foodstuffs, smaller farm implements, and the like.

Where space and topography permitted, the front of the dwelling was oriented in a southerly direction. This arrangement had several advantages. First, it sheltered the building's single entryway from the prevailing northwesterly winds. Second, the south facing orientation combined with a broad eave arrangement of the roof provided passive temperature control during the hot continental summers and cold winters. During the hot summer months when the noon sun was high in the sky, the front of the house, where most of the windows were located, was in shade. Conversely, the eaves did not impede the sun's weaker, less vertical, winter rays from providing welcome heat and light (Samojlovych 1961:52).

The outbuildings of a Ukrainian farmstead served one or another of three basic functions: animal shelters, crop storage, or farm implement shelters (Kosmina 1980:86). Animal shelters were the most universal. Wealthier farmers tended to have separate stables for horses, cows, oxen, pigs, and poultry, while poorer ones were apt to keep their more limited

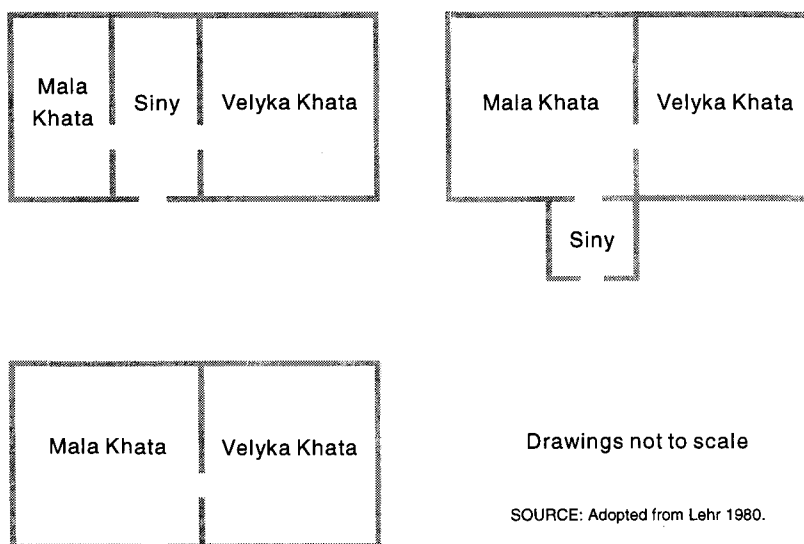


Figure 2. Typical traditional Galician house plans.

numbers of livestock in the same building, with low partitions separating one species from another. At times the farm family and the farm animals lived in separate rooms of the same structure. Wealthier farmers also built separate specialized structures for crop storage—grain, hay, and straw—along with farm implement and wagon shelters. Grain, for example, would be stored in a *stodola*, which sometimes accommodated a flailing floor (Kosmina 1980:86). Some less well-to-do farmers stored their more modest grain harvests along with their more limited number of farm implements within their own dwellings. Others had a *komora*, a kind of universal storage shed. Hay and straw were often left out of doors, at times protected by a barrack. Outbuilding construction was similar to that of the houses in that the structures' walls were built of logs plastered over with mud and protected by thatch roofing. On many farmsteads these various buildings were attached to one another under a common roof, thereby saving building material and space. Wherever possible the various buildings, house included, were arranged in a rectangular fashion to form an open central farmyard with the fronts of the buildings facing inward (Fig. 3). The siting of individual buildings within this scheme varied according to topography and available building space.

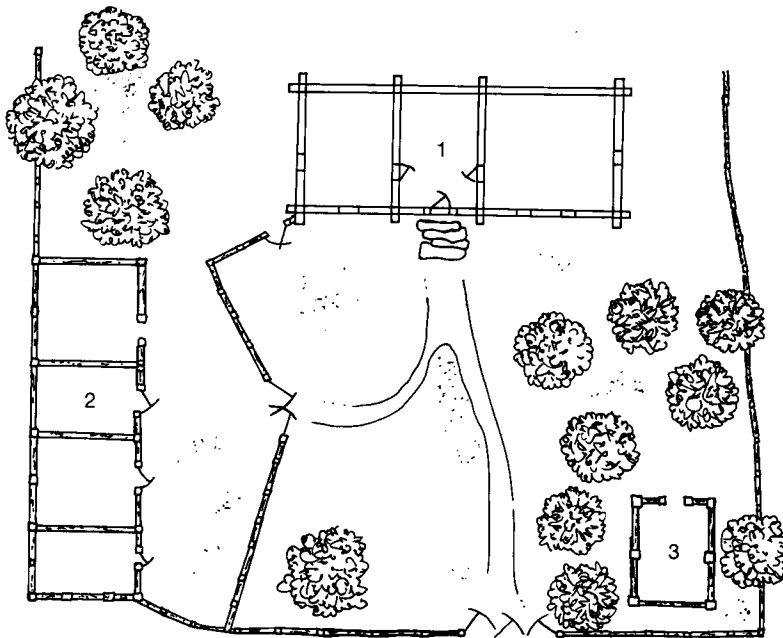
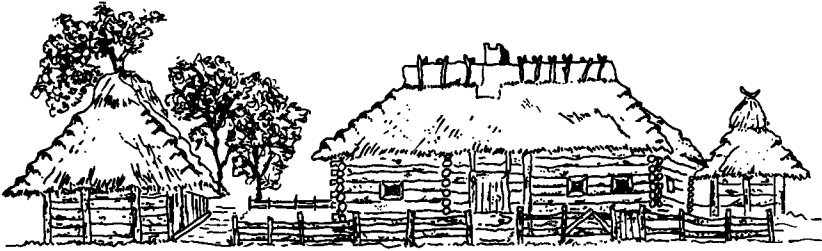
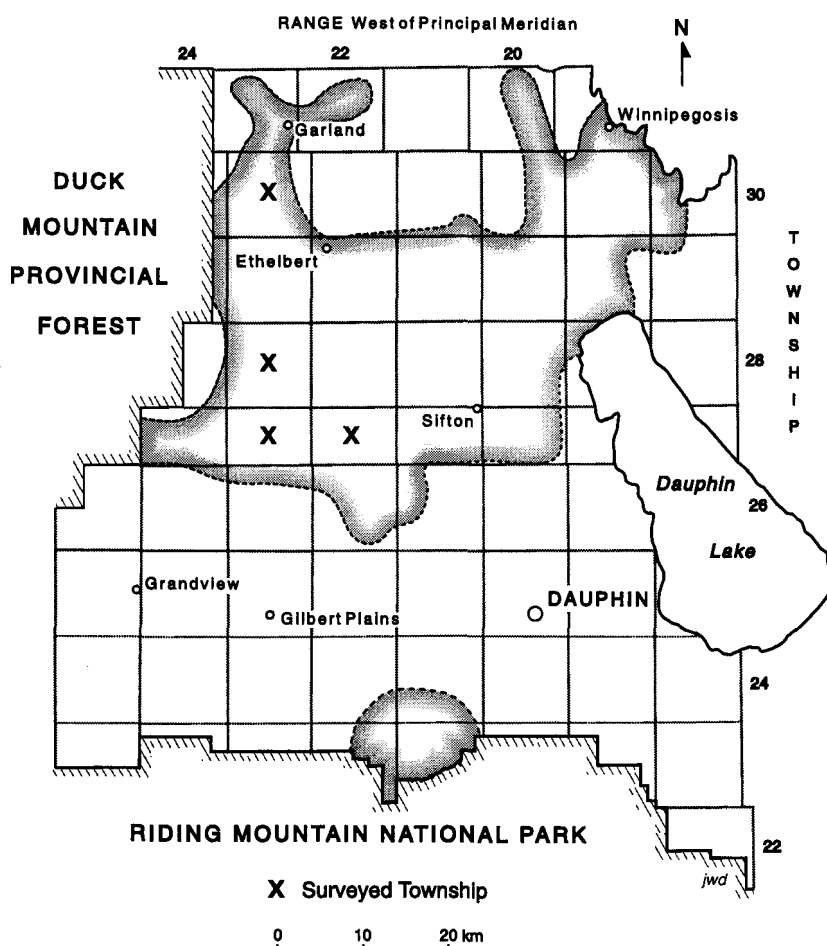


Figure 3. A lower class Galician farmstead containing house (1), animal sheds (2), and granary (3) (redrawn from Kosmina 1980).

The Dauphin Bloc Settlement

The first group of Ukrainian families arrived in Dauphin, Manitoba, from Galicia in the late summer of 1896. Within a few months most had filed a homestead claim for a quarter-section of land in the western half of

SIFTON - ETHELBERT UKRAINIAN BLOC SETTLEMENT



SOURCE: Fieldwork by author.

Figure 4. The Sifton-Ethelbert Ukrainian bloc settlement region.

Township 26, Range 20 west, along the Drifting River, an area about a dozen miles northwest of the village of Dauphin (Fig. 4) (Kaye 1964:184-88). Many more Galician families followed during the next few years (Kaye 1975:2-118); and by 1901 an estimated 5,500 Ukrainians were living in the

greater Dauphin region (National Archives of Canada 1901a). By and large, these people emigrated as nuclear families (Martynowych 1991:78-79), a situation that helped facilitate the rapid development of their farm operations.

Within the four townships that are the focus of this paper, the first Ukrainian settlement took place in 1897. By 1910 homestead claims had been filed for nearly all of the even numbered land sections (Ewanchuk 1988:28 and 60). The land within these townships exhibited considerable diversity. Except for Township 27 Range 21 west which is relatively flat, the area is gently to moderately rolling. An important physical feature found in all four townships is a series of north-south trending beach lines formed by glacial Lake Agassiz. At the time of initial settlement, much of the better-drained land was covered with stands of balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), and willow (*Salix* spp.) intermixed with occasional bluffs of white spruce (*Picea glauca*). Government surveyors, at the time of the initial survey, also noted areas of standing fire-killed trees along with patches of dense bush. The poorer drained land supported stands of tamarack (*Larix laricina*) and black spruce (*Picea mariana*). A considerable amount of the timber, particularly poplar, aspen, and white spruce, was of sufficient quality to be used for log construction. The soil quality in the area is patchy and ranges from some that is moderately high in fertility and well suited to agricultural cropping to some, like the gravel beach ridges, that are of limited agricultural worth. Overall, the agricultural potential of the surveyed townships is average to above average compared to the rest of the original Ukrainian settlement bloc (Ehrlich et. al. 1959).

Farmstead Survey

A field survey in the summer of 1991 revealed the presence of 284 farmsteads in the four sample townships (Table 1). More than half of the farmsteads stood vacant or abandoned at the time of the survey, a clear reflection of rural depopulation and the marginal nature of agriculture in the area. The types of buildings associated with all of the abandoned and most of the active farmsteads indicate that mixed farming was the standard in years past. At the time of the survey, however, half of the 128 fully occupied farmsteads were associated with farms that focused exclusively on crops, principally wheat, barley, canola, and buckwheat. Of the remaining farms, all but 12 combined grain growing with beef cattle production.

TABLE 1
FARM TYPES IN SAMPLE TOWNSHIPS

Township	Grain	Beef	Mixed	Vacant	Total
27 - 21	15	3	12	34	64
27 - 22	21	0	6	38	65
28 - 22	15	2	21	48	86
30 - 22	13	7	13	36	69
Total	64	12	52	156	284

(Source: author)

A more comprehensive survey was made of twenty-one farmsteads, containing a total of 204 buildings. The sample farmsteads all contained a complete, or near complete, compliment of structures (Table 2). The complexes ranged in size from four to twenty-two buildings, the average being slightly less than ten. All twenty-one farmsteads contained log structures; and although specific dates of construction were impossible to collect, each was also believed to contain at least one building erected prior to 1930.

For purposes of analysis, farm buildings were grouped into three categories, namely domestic structures, barns and other animal shelters, and storage facilities. Farmhouses were, of course, a standard component of the farmsteads, although in one instance the house on an abandoned farmstead had burned to the ground leaving very little to examine. Six of the farms contained two dwellings; and in all six instances the two structures represented different generations of building technology. The older of the two was invariably built of log, while the more recent was made from dimensioned lumber. Overall, of the twenty-six farmhouses included in the sample, sixteen were built of log; and all but two of these log structures faced south (the exceptions faced east and southeast). In addition to a dwelling, two-thirds of the surveyed farmsteads contained a summer kitchen. Although varied in design, each of these buildings was made of logs. Besides serving as auxiliary kitchen space, these structures also provided additional sleeping quarters for families that had outgrown the farmhouse.

TABLE 2
FARMSTEAD STRUCTURES AND STATUS ON SAMPLE FARMS
IN SAMPLE TOWNSHIPS

Township	House	Barn	Hog Barn	Summer Kitchen	Granary	Chicken Coop	Tool Shed	Implement Shed	Garage	Present Status
27 - 21	2	-	-	1	3	2	-	-	1	occupied
	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	vacant
	1	1	1	-	3	-	-	-	1	vacant
	2	4	1	1	5	1	-	1	1	occupied
	1	2	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	vacant
	1	1	-	-	4	1	1	-	1	vacant
27 - 22	1	2	-	-	4	2	1	-	-	vacant
	2	2	-	1	6	2	-	1	-	occupied
	1	1	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	?
	1	1	-	-	3	1	-	1	-	vacant
	1	3	1	1	3	1	-	1	1	vacant
28 - 22	1	2	-	1	5	1	1	-	-	vacant
	1	2	-	1	3	1	-	1	-	vacant
	1	1	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	vacant
	1	2	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	vacant
	-	2	-	1	3	1	-	-	-	vacant
	2	3	1	1	13	1	-	1	-	occupied
30 - 22	2	1	-	1	4	1	1	-	-	occupied
	1	2	1	1	5	1	-	-	1	occupied
	2	2	-	1	2	1	1	-	1	vacant
	1	2	-	-	3	2	-	2	-	vacant
Total	27	37	7	14	77	24	5	7	7	

(Source: author)

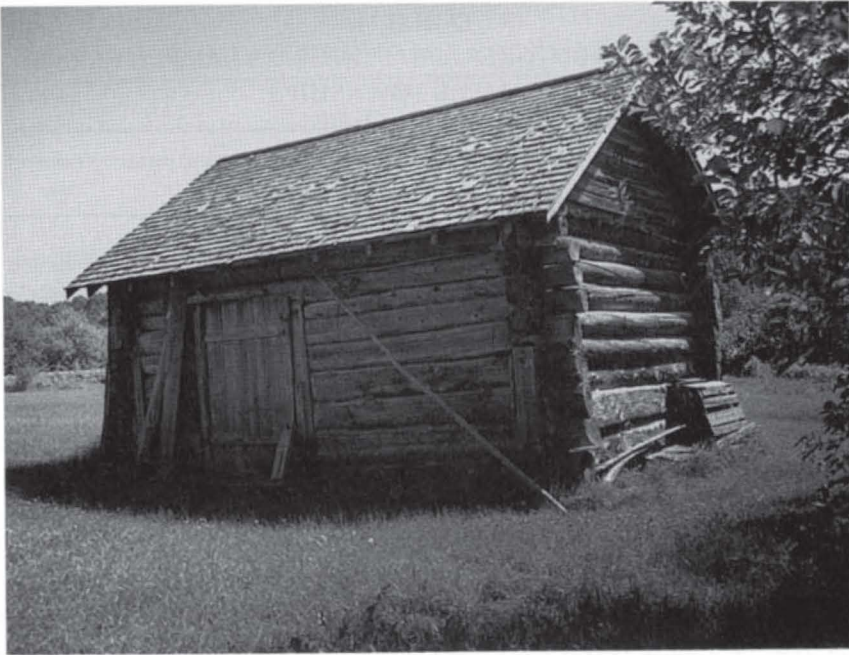


Figure 5. Log granary built in 1898 on Wasyl Negrych farm, note wooden hinge arrangement (photograph by author).

Animal shelters of one sort or another were found on each farmstead. The largest and most common of these structures were barns, buildings here classified as any structure used to house dairy cows or horses. These buildings ranged in age from the late 1890s to the 1960s, and in size from three or four-stall stables with very limited storage space for fodder to a twenty-stall dairy barn with substantially greater loft space for hay. A typical barn contained eight stalls and accommodated a modest amount of hay storage under a gable roof. All but three of the thirty-four barns found on the sample farmsteads were built of log, a ratio that strongly and accurately reflects the size and economic history of farming in the area. Over half of the farmsteads had more than one barn and in a number of instances the second barn was very similar in size, layout, and construction to the first, a point that reflects the conservative nature of the farmers as well as the limited economic viability of the farm operations. This is not to suggest that all of the farmers

in the area were reluctant to change. On some farms the size, layout, and roof design of the second barn displayed substantial innovation. Further, these adjustments were incorporated into barns built of logs as well as of dimensioned lumber. Other types of animal shelters were found on all twenty-one farmsteads. Chicken coops were nearly universal while about a third of the farms had a hog shed or barn.

Storage facilities for crops and machinery constituted the third category of farmstead structure. Tool sheds, implement sheds, and garages were part of a minority of the farmsteads. Granaries, on the other hand, were found on all of the farms; indeed, granaries were by far the most common type of farm building associated with the sample farmsteads. Every farm had at least one, and one farm had thirteen. As structures they varied tremendously in age and construction. Many were made of logs, including one built in 1898 (Fig. 5). Some were two-by-four frame covered with tongue and groove siding; others were made of plywood or particle board, others still of galvanized steel.

The structures found on the twenty-one farmsteads clearly represent several different eras of building construction. Closer scrutiny of these structures in terms of their age, layout, and design as well as their construction reveal a pattern of evolution and adjustment that fits into several stages of cultural and economic change.

The Pioneer Period

Under any circumstances, creating a farmstead from scratch is neither a quick nor easy process. But, the task is greatly compounded when a family is financially strapped, a condition that characterized the overwhelming majority of immigrant Ukrainian farm families. The effort expended in creating the farmstead had to be balanced with the clearing and breaking of land, the planting and harvesting of crops, and, in the case of most Ukrainian settlers, working beyond the farmstead for much needed cash. As a consequence, farm buildings were erected as the need arose and as time and money permitted.

After filing a claim for a quarter-section of land, a family's most pressing concern was to build a shelter for themselves. Typically a crude hut fashioned from saplings and boughs served that purpose for a few weeks until a more substantial structure could be constructed (Nahachewsky 1985:23-24). In most cases this second shelter was a small sod-roofed dug-out modeled after the huts built by Carpathian shepherds (Nahachewsky

1985). Although crude and cramped, these structures provided adequate protection against the elements during the immigrants' first Canadian winter or until a more substantial house could be erected. Usually within a year or so, the dug-out was replaced by a more substantial but nonetheless hurriedly built log dwelling of one or sometimes two rooms. The walls were made of unpeeled and crudely notched poplar or spruce logs plastered over with mud. The roof was thatched; and the floors were earthen (Ledohowski 1987:9). One contemporary observer described these early structures as "mostly one-roomed huts" (Schiller 1911:468). Although certainly more comfortable than a dug-out, these structures too were seen by their builders as temporary accommodations that would do until the family had the resources to build a proper house. This practice of constructing the first log dwelling in a hurried, less than careful manner parallels the behavior of American and German settlers in Texas (Jordon 1978:105; Leiding 1992:168).

In the mean time, other parts of the farmstead began to take form as various outbuildings were raised, wells were dug, land was cleared, and fences were erected. Government inspection reports indicate that the Ukrainian settlers worked quickly in this regard. One such report was made in June of 1898 for a group of Ukrainian immigrants who had settled a year earlier on lands about a dozen miles south of the present study area. Of the twenty-three families that had arrived the previous June, all had built a dwelling, seventeen had erected a stable, and the same number had dug a well. In addition, each family was reported to be cultivating one to six acres of land (National Archives of Canada 1898). The evidence suggests that progress continued to be rapid in the years that followed. Three years after the first report was made, a second inventory was taken of nine of the original twenty-three farms. The nine farms reported a total of twenty-four outbuildings, an increase of seventeen structures from the previous survey (National Archives of Canada 1901b).

What these buildings looked like is somewhat less clear. None are known to still exist and no photographs or detailed contemporary descriptions have been found. These limitations notwithstanding, the size of these early outbuildings was no doubt small since the farmers had few livestock and limited harvests to store. One woman from the nearby village of Ethelbert wrote in 1905 that, "In approaching a group of Galician buildings, it is sometimes a question of which is the house and which is the stable, as both are small log structures plastered on the outside with mud, and having thatched roofs." (Monro 1905:236). The speed with which these structures were erected suggests that, like the first houses, the early outbuildings were crude reproductions of traditional Ukrainian folk architecture.

The Traditional Period

The endless work combined with the careful investment of off-farm wages began to pay tangible dividends within a few years. Besides additional crop acreage many families were soon able to accumulate a few head of cattle, several pigs, a team of oxen, a wagon, and some animal powered farm implements, all of which helped enhance farm income. This in turn meant that many farm families were in a position to begin to replace their first generation buildings with more permanent ones. Evidence suggests that this new generation of structures was larger, more substantial, and much more carefully crafted than the first.

New buildings were invariably set on large, carefully positioned, and partially buried foundation stones. Unlike some other Ukrainian settlement districts, the Dauphin area contained adequate supplies of quality timber to permit the early settlers to build using their preferred methods of construction (Lehr 1980:186). Thus, building walls were made of large, peeled, horizontally placed logs held in position with wooden pegs and dovetail or saddle notching. With few exceptions, they were coated inside and out with a layer of mud and straw and the entire structure was protected by a high pitched roof of thatch made from marsh grass or rye straw. Other Old World building traditions were also maintained. Houses, for example, were divided into two or sometimes three rooms, with a large clay bake oven contained in the smaller of the two living rooms. As the need for new outbuildings arose, they too tended to be built in the traditional form.

By 1910 some of the farm complexes had grown to impressive size as the Wasyl Negrych farmstead illustrates. Negrych had arrived in Canada with his wife Annie in 1897 and filed a homestead claim to the southeast quarter of Section 14, Township 27, and Range 22 west that same year. Thirteen years later the family had grown to include seven children—six boys and a girl. Local tax assessment rolls for 1910 indicate that Negrych had 20 acres under cultivation and owned six oxen, twelve cattle, and two pigs (Gilbert Plains Rural Municipality 1910). The farmstead consisted of nine well constructed log buildings including a three-room house, a summer kitchen, two stables, a small storage barn, two granaries, a pig shed, and a chicken coop (Negrych 1990). Although no other farmsteads built during this early period remain completely intact, evidence found on other surveyed farmsteads indicate that the building types found on the Negrych farm are typical of the period. The Negrych place also reveals the level of self-sufficiency at which the settlers functioned. Aside from a few small panes of glass and a couple of pounds of nails, little of the materials used to build

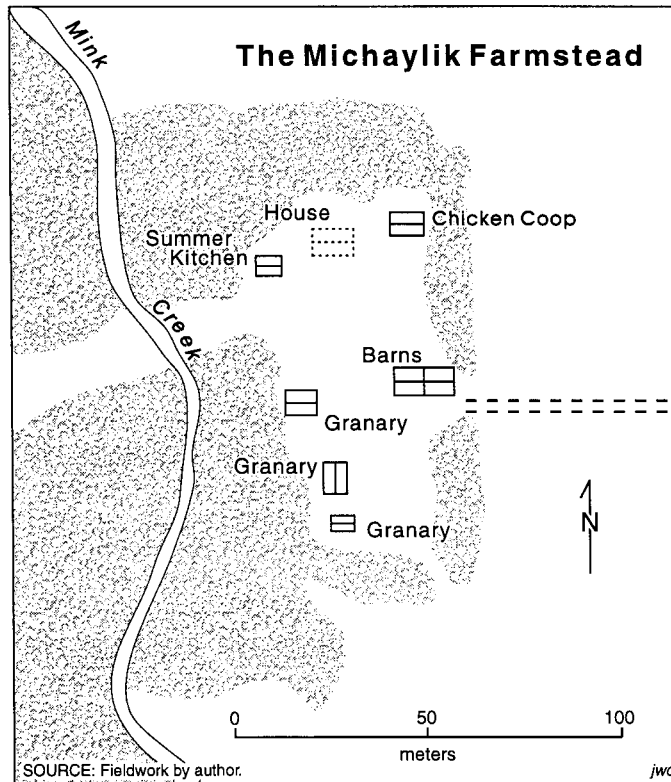


Figure 6. The Machaylik farmstead (NE 9-28-22w), an example of an early compact farmstead.

these early structures was purchased. This is clearly illustrated by door construction on the old buildings. The boards that make-up the doors were fastened together with battens using a sliding dovetail joint and a half dozen nails, while door hinges and latches were made of wood (Fig. 5).

Old World traditions concerning the physical layout of the farmstead also were followed. Structures were sometimes positioned directly adjacent to one another and laid out in a compact fashion (Fig. 6). Dwellings were, with few exceptions, oriented to the south. Other major buildings normally faced either south or east, away from the prevailing northwesterly winds. Local site considerations occasionally prompted a farmer to deviate from the norm. Such was the case with Wasyl Negrych who chose to take advantage

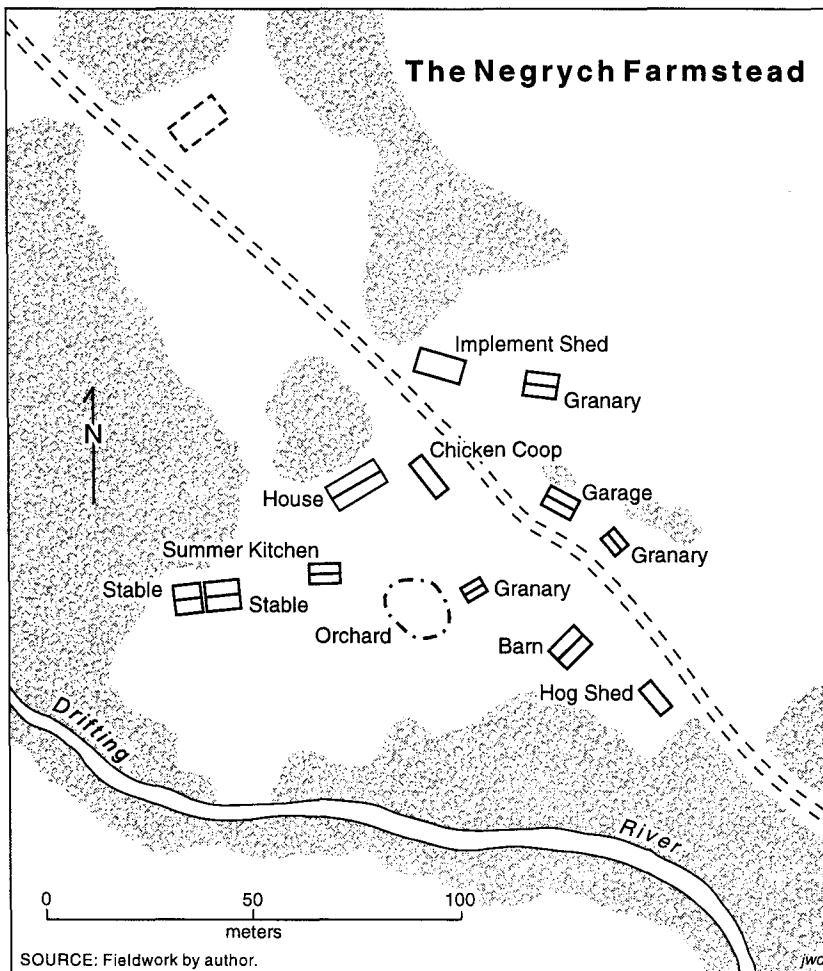


Figure 7. The Wasyl Negrych farmstead (SE 14-27-22w).

of the local slope and orient his house to the southeast. Proximity to the nearby stream and the fact that the access road to the farmstead was the original settlement trail for the local area were additional factors he and his family almost certainly took into account when laying out the various farm outbuildings (Fig. 7). It is worth noting that many of the earliest farmsteads in the area were located near running water, thereby eliminating any immediate need for digging a well. Although marsh grass was substituted for rye

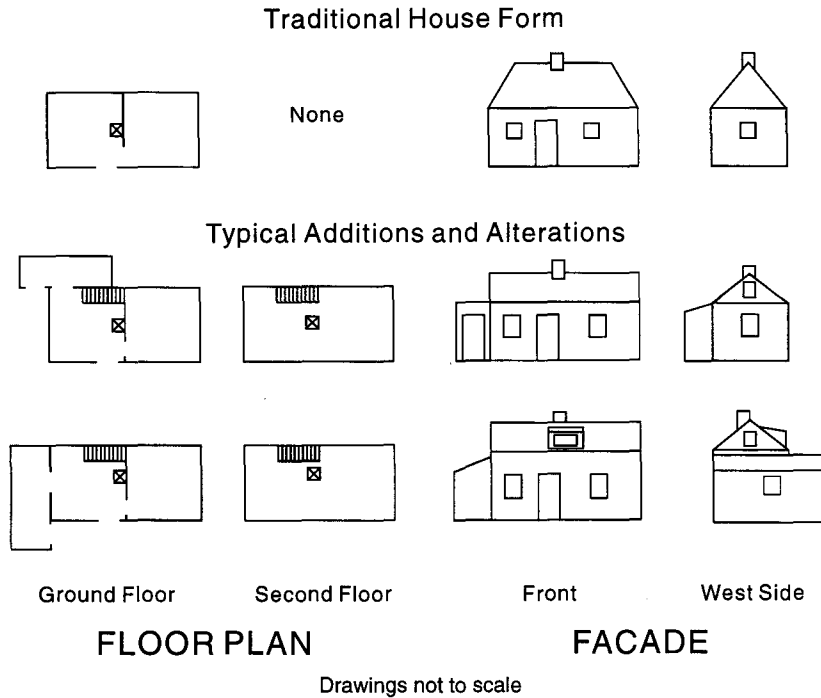
straw, and poplar and spruce replaced oak and pine timber, few non-traditional building techniques were utilized. In short, these early second generation structures displayed the clearest and most comprehensive reflection of the builders' Ukrainian heritage.

The Transitional Period

The First World War had a considerable impact on the local agricultural economy. High commodity prices during the war gave many Ukrainian farmers a critical infusion of capital to further develop their farming operations (Urquhart and Buckley 196: 359-60; Makuch 1983:71-73). Some took the opportunity to acquire more land; nearly all invested in new agricultural equipment in an effort to improve farm operating efficiency (Darlington 1991:74). For some of the later arrivals, the war years offered the first real chance to enter into the agricultural market economy. A 1916 survey of two hundred Ukrainian farmers in the nearby Ethelbert area revealed that 94% owned draft animals, while 96% owned at least one milk cow and a number appeared to be well on their way toward establishing a modest dairy farm operation (Murchie 1917:37).

The improved economic situation soon became evident in new farm buildings which incorporated increasing amounts of commercially manufactured materials. Dimensioned or milled lumber was used for floors, ceilings, windows, and doors. Log wall construction remained the standard; but unlike previously, the timbers were more frequently face sawn and invariably held in place with dovetail notching. The walls continued to be plastered with mud, but to help facilitate purchase, willow branches were nailed to the logs in a diagonal pattern. Far more nails were used in the construction of these later buildings than had been used previously. House floor plans and orientation remained essentially unchanged; but cast iron stoves and brick chimneys began to replace clay bake ovens and clay and wattle chimneys.

The rate of adoption of non-traditional building materials and practices continued to accelerate during the 1920s. And although log construction remained common, examples of frame construction began to appear. Some of the frame houses followed the traditional floor plan; others did not. House orientation also began to change during this time. Rather than face south, some of the new houses were turned so as to face the road. A much more universal and dramatic change in the architectural landscape that began in the 1920s involved the substitution of wooden roofing shingles for thatch. Although occasionally hand split in the traditional manner, many farmers



SOURCE: Fieldwork by author

jwd

Figure 8. Typical modifications made to traditional Galician farm houses.

chose instead to purchase shingles along with other building supplies. Farmers no doubt saw this as money well spent since shingles required far less upkeep and greatly reduced the risk of fire. But this switch in roof covering was more than just a straightforward replacement process. Because shingles do not require as steep a roof pitch as does thatch, roof-lines were usually lowered. To further facilitate construction, straight gable roofs often took the place of more traditional hipped or hipped-gable roofs. These changes were introduced not only on new buildings but on older ones as well. Another significant adjustment involved house floor plans (Fig. 8). What had traditionally been open, unused space above the eave-line of dwellings was now provided with a floor and thus transformed into a second story sleeping and storage area made accessible by a narrow set of interior stairs.

This modification was made to old as well as new houses, and sometimes included adding a course or two of logs above the floor joists to raise the roof and create more head room. For light, windows usually were cut in the gable ends and sometimes dormers were added. Other living space adjustments were made to the first floor. A small shed-roofed addition often was built onto the back of the house adjoining the *mala khata* to serve as a second entryway and pantry. Some of these additions were built of sawed lumber; in other cases, the walls were made of small diameter vertical logs. The size of the latter was a reflection of the diminishing local supply of quality timber and the technical problems associated with joining the new walls to the original structure. Most of this effort to increase living space took place at a time when the average family size in the area was declining, thus suggesting that improved material wealth was an important motivating factor behind the decision to expand living space (Dominion Bureau of Statistics 1938). The urge to modernize the house sometimes included sheathing the exterior with tongue and groove siding. Once again, such a move was not simply cosmetic; wood siding eliminated the annual task of repairing a building's mud exterior.

Farm outbuildings underwent a parallel set of changes during this time. Growing livestock herds necessitated bigger, more efficient animal shelters. In the early 1920s, barns began to take the place of stables. Built of logs with a single entryway on the eave side and covered with a straight gable roof, the earliest of these new structures were little more than expanded versions of the buildings they replaced. But by the end of the decade, as agricultural activity continued to expand, much more substantive changes began to appear. New barns tended to be larger and many sported a gambrel roof, a feature that increased head room and hay storage capacity. In some instances the barn floor plan was turned ninety degrees so that the aisle ran parallel to the ridgepole; and large doors were placed at both gable ends. This arrangement facilitated access with hay wagons and other pieces of farm machinery. Aside from the fact that they continued to be built of logs, these new barns exhibited little of traditional Ukrainian design or building technique; and in some instances even the logs were covered over by tongue and groove siding. In similar fashion, improved farming techniques resulted in larger grain harvests which in turn prompted farmers to expand their grain storage facilities. Old structures were rarely torn down. Instead they were relegated to some other use.

The abandoned Musey farmstead exhibits the intermingling of new and traditional building practices, a situation that epitomizes the transitional



Figure 9. The Musey farmstead (NW 23-27-22w) with old barns on the far left. Note shed roof addition on the rear of the house (photograph by author). Addendum: After having stood vacant for a decade, this entire farmstead was bulldozed and burned in the spring of 1996.

period (Fig. 9). The south facing sawn log house is subdivided into three first floor rooms—the *velyka khata*, the *mala khata*, and a pantry off the back—and a large second floor bedroom with two front-facing dormers. In addition, a substantial cellar exists under the central portion of the house; and the entire structure is supported by a poured cement foundation. Outside, the building's original mud plastered exterior is covered with tongue and groove siding. The latter point provides a clear indication that modifications were often made in a stepwise rather than aggregate fashion. The farmstead also contains two generations of animal shelters. The earliest consists of three eastward facing log structures with limited loft space that are joined by common walls. Of more recent construction is a gambrel roofed barn. It too is made of logs; but unlike the other livestock buildings, it is covered with tongue and groove siding which almost certainly was added some time after

the barn was built. The farmstead also includes several generations of granaries. The original log granary was twice expanded using sawed lumber, but with traditional common wall construction.

The Post-Acculturation Period

Judging from new building construction, by the late 1940s the acculturation process among the Ukrainian farm families in the area was nearly complete. Log construction, along with other traditional building practices, had become a thing of the past. Indeed, farm life in general was becoming a thing of the past for a growing segment of the local population. All four townships surveyed in this study experienced a substantial population decline in the three decades between 1921 and 1951 (Dominion Bureau of Statistics 1938:1953a). More specifically, the population of the four townships dropped by an average 62% in the thirty to thirty-five years between the time they reported their peak population and mid-century. In this regard, they were representative not only of the rest of the Sifton-Ethelbert bloc settlement but of other areas of large Ukrainian settlement as well (Carlyle 1989:21, 1994:74). While the timing of the most dramatic declines varied from township to township, on average, over half of the population decrease occurred during the 1920s (Dominion Bureau of Statistics 1925, 1938).

This demographic shift was closely related to increased involvement in the agricultural market economy. Farm statistics are available for the Rural Municipality of Ethelbert, which contains two of the four sample townships, and is the only rural municipality in the region that lies completely within the local Ukrainian bloc settlement. Population figures for the three decades between 1921 and 1951 reveal that the municipality's rural population growth climaxed in 1921; but the number of operating farms continued to increase until 1936, a date that also stands out in regards to crop acreage. In the three decades beginning with 1921, the average area per farm planted in field crops increased by 92%, from 15.2 hectares (37.6 acres) in 1921 to 29.2 hectares (72.2 acres) in 1951 (Dominion Bureau of Statistics 1925, 1953b). The largest gains were after 1936 (Dominion Bureau of Statistics 1938). These figures suggest two points. First, substantial commercial expansion and associated farm mechanization lagged a few years behind the depopulation transition. Second and more importantly from the present perspective, increased crop acreage appears closely correlated to farm consolidation. If the years immediately following World War I marked the entry of the local Ukrainian farm community into the market economy, then the

close of World War II marked the end of semi-subsistence mixed farming in the region.

By mid-century farm consolidation was beginning to have a noticeable impact on the local agricultural landscape. The 1951 census reported a total of 488 farms operating in the Rural Municipality of Ethelbert, a number that was 18% less than the comparable figure for 1936 (Dominion Bureau of Statistics 1938, 1953b). Almost one out of every five farmsteads in the municipality was either gone or uninhabited. Not surprisingly, the less viable farms were normally the first to be abandoned or sold; but the uninhabited farmsteads were rarely torn down, at least not initially. Instead, the granaries, the old farm house, and, at times, the barns continued to be utilized by their new owners, but not always in the capacity for which they had been built. Faced with the need for yet additional grain storage capacity, vacant farm houses were altered for use as granaries. Conversion was straightforward and involved little more than boarding up the doors and windows and punching a hole in the roof or upper side wall of the structure. Barns and other less weather tight buildings that lacked a raised floor were sometimes modified to serve as equipment storage sheds. In most instances, alterations were made with a chain saw, with no thought given to permanence. Pig stys, chicken coops, and other small structures were seen as having little utility and were simply left to the elements.

Change was also evident on many of the occupied farmsteads. With few exceptions, these were the sites of the more conspicuous modernization, expansion, and construction efforts. Most often, modification came in the form of additional granaries or a new house. Designed around a contemporary room arrangement, built with dimensioned lumber and other commercial materials, and invariably oriented toward the road, the new houses shared little, save perhaps color, with traditional Ukrainian house designs. Some farmers also elected to build new vault-roofed dairy barns which stood in sharp contrast to the old log barns they were replacing (Fig. 10).

Nineteen ninety-six marked the centennial anniversary of the first Ukrainian settlement in the region. A drive through the study area today, a century after the first Ukrainian settlers filed homestead claims, reveals a composite of traditional, transitional, and modern farm buildings. A few of the remaining farmsteads are thoroughly modern operations that display little, if any, evidence of the ethnic heritage of their founders (Fig. 11). Most, however, continue to exhibit a mix of new and old.

The most dramatic changes of late involve abandoned farmsteads and other vacant farm buildings. The Manitoba provincial government began



Figure 10. Log barn and a dairy barn built in 1960 on the Tomylachuk farm (SE 16-27-22w) (photograph by author).

revising its rural tax assessment code in the late 1980s. Among other adjustments, the new code eliminated tax exempt status for all farm residences and farm production buildings (Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation 1988). The intent of this change was to remove tax inequities between land-intensive agricultural operations, such as grain and livestock producers, that had previously borne a disproportionately large segment of the farm tax burden, and building-intensive agricultural operations, such as poultry, hog, and greenhouse enterprises, that had enjoyed lower municipal realty and school taxes. The problem was that **all** farm structures, regardless of age, use, or condition, were to be assessed. The fear was that many old, vacant farm buildings would be torn down in order to avoid property taxes. Recognizing the threat to rural heritage, the Manitoba Historical Society led the fight to have this portion of the new legislation reconsidered. The suggested modification called for exempting buildings over 40 years old and valued at \$500 or less, and further, to declare a five year moratorium on this

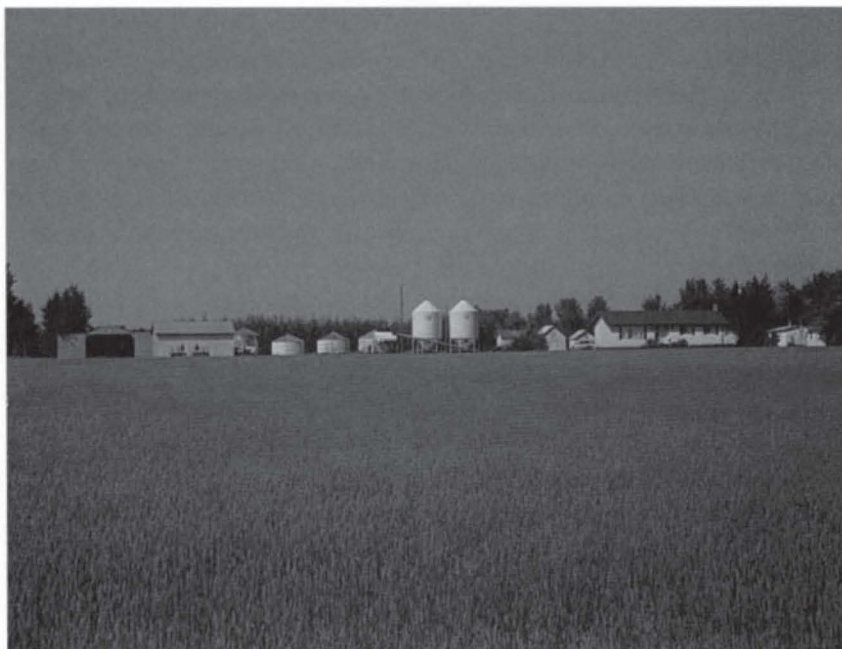


Figure 11. The Maksymetz farmstead (SW 4-28-22w), a modern grain farm (photograph by author).

section of the legislation to allow local areas time to take an inventory of their built heritage and to establish preservation priorities.

In early 1989 newspapers across the province and politicians from the opposition parties had taken up the cause (*Carberry News Express* 1989; *Melita New Era* 1989; *Morden Pembina Times* 1989; *Virden Empire-Advance* 1989; Weber 1989; Liberal Caucus 1989). The director of the provincial Assessment Branch downplayed the concerns by suggesting that under the new scheme the tax increase would be minor in many cases (Weber 1989). He is quoted as saying, "The great majority of them [farm buildings] have very minimal value, for the reason that they are historic" (Weber 1989). Non sequitur aside, his thinking, it seems, was that farmers were not likely to go to the effort of tearing down a building in order to save a few dollars in taxes. Nevertheless, the Assessment Branch did ultimately respond to public concern and revise the controversial section of the assessment act to exclude from taxation any "permanently vacant or abandoned" farm building that

was at least sixty years old (Province of Manitoba 1990). No moratorium was granted.

Unfortunately, the original wording of the assessment act prompted many landowners to consider removing old unused buildings. Over the next few years, dozens of abandoned farm buildings in the study area were bulldozed, burned, or otherwise destroyed by landowners who put financial concerns ahead of the heritage value of a major distinguishing element within a distinctive ethnic landscape.

Conclusions

The farmsteads built by Ukrainian immigrants and their descendants in the parkland belt of western Canada provide tangible evidence of the acculturation process. Four periods can be identified, each one characterized by a different set of primary concerns and conditions. Construction in the first or pioneer period was dominated by an immediate, sometimes urgent, need to erect a shelter for the family. Thus, the principal concern was speed and ease of construction. Old World building practices were utilized, but more for reasons of convenience and familiarity with construction rather than concern for tradition. The result was a farmstead composed of small, rough, crudely made buildings constructed exclusively of locally gathered materials. These initial structures were seen by their builders as temporary at the time of their construction. In contrast, cost, quality, and permanency were the major concerns of the second or traditional period. Local materials were again used extensively, but much more care was taken in material selection and building construction. The farmstead buildings erected during this period reflected most closely the cultural traditions of the immigrant farm families. This second generation of farm structures, built within a decade of settlement, reflects also the long term aspirations of the first generation Ukrainian immigrants. Thus, while these settlers were beginning to achieve some limited agricultural success they continued to see themselves and set their goals in the light of their Old World experiences. The transitional period was a time of adjustment and accommodation when long standing traditions were modified or rejected in favor of Anglo Canadian practices. Subsistence oriented agriculture began to give way to market based agriculture. Building materials became a mixture of locally produced and commercial products. As farm operations continued to expand and become more fully integrated into the market economy, labor saving concerns rose in importance. Improved economic status and increased material wealth were

reflected in expanded living and storage space in both dwellings and out-buildings. The post-acculturation period, as the name implies, identifies the time when acculturation among Ukrainian Canadians was complete from a material culture perspective and Old World influences were barely evident in new farm structures. Since mid-century, the Ukrainian character of the farmsteads in the Sifton-Ethelbert bloc settlement has diminished dramatically as a result of the dual forces of acculturation and economic expansion.

The evidence presented here is not so much different as it is more inclusive than much of what has been reported elsewhere for various immigrant groups. Most studies of European vernacular architecture in North America focus almost exclusively on the oldest surviving structures built by particular ethnic groups. As a consequence little attention is paid to subsequent construction. The farmsteads built by Ukrainian settlers in one settlement bloc in Manitoba make it clear that the move from traditional Ukrainian to contemporary Canadian building forms took place in a series of stages rather than as a single step. This paper suggests that much can be learned about the cultural adjustments made by a particular immigrant group by broadening that perspective and examining the structures erected before and since those earliest surviving buildings. It was not until their fourth farmhouse was built that most Ukrainian immigrant families in western Canada truly replaced their Old World building traditions. The pattern was similar for farm outbuilding design and arrangement. In the case of the Ukrainian settlers, the acculturation process may have been slowed by the extent and homogeneity of their bloc settlements and by the marginal quality of their land. Yet, it seems reasonable to assume that a parallel set of cultural adjustments were displayed in the farmsteads built by other ethnic groups who pioneered the agricultural settlement of large sections of rural North America.

Acknowledgments

The research presented here was funded by the Manitoba Heritage Federation.

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